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Milwaukee shines a spotlight on mental illness with debut of new theatrical performance acts with focus on recovery

“Pieces: In My Own Voice” shares new insight into life with mental illness, provides resources for community members to get help, and spreads hope that recovery is possible

(Milwaukee, WI) October 16, 2017 - A collaboration of community leaders, health systems, congregations and colleges announced they will present the premiere of the new version of “Pieces: In My Own Voice,” a play that emphasizes the struggles of living with a mental health disorder and the stigma of mental illness through music, song, dance and spoken word. The new acts will premiere on Wednesday, October 25 at 6:30 p.m. at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) Cooley Auditorium as part of Mental Health Day - MKE.

“Mental illness affects everyone - regardless of race, gender, religion... everyone knows someone with a mental illness,” said Pastor Walter Lanier, JD, MDIV, Director of the Men of Color Initiative at MATC and Milwaukee County Mental Health Board member. “There is not enough awareness, resources or access to mental health care. We are using this day as a way to encourage people living with mental illness to connect with resources that can help, and build awareness for how we as a community can support individuals with mental illness.”

According to the [National Institute of Mental Health](#), approximately one in five adults in the United States has a mental illness, and rates of suicide attempts and deaths by prescription drug overdose are on the rise, nationwide. The new acts in “Pieces” highlight the prevalence of these disorders, from depression, suicidal thoughts, schizophrenia, AODA (alcohol and other drug abuse) and more and their impact on people’s lives. Throughout the play, the audience feels the sense of hope as the actors take control of their disorders and their lives through treatment and recovery. The audience is able to ask questions of the actors with lived-experience and licensed physicians through a Q&A segment after the play.

“We know that people can and do recover from mental illness,” said Brenda Wesley, creator, producer, and director of “Pieces: In My Own Voice,” Director of Education Outreach for National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) Greater Milwaukee, Milwaukee County Mental Health Board member, and mother of a child with mental illness. “When we connect individuals to care that is trauma-informed and culturally intelligent, we are able to better prevent mental health crises before they happen and connect individuals with treatment to start their recovery journeys.”

The premiere of the new version of “Pieces: In My Own Voice” is a part of Mental Health Awareness Day - MKE, hosted at the MATC - Downtown Milwaukee Campus. The production will be performed and interpreted for the deaf and hard of hearing. The day also consists of a resource fair for community members to gather information on programs and services that can support individuals with mental illness prevent a crisis, treat their disorder and focus on recovery. A mental health workshop, titled “Recovery and Adverse Childhood Experiences” will also be available. The entire event is free and open to the public; Registration is advised.

“Mental illness must be treated holistically, just like cancer or other physical illnesses,” said Brigitte Hyler Richerson, Vice President of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Upsilon Mu Omega Chapter, a sponsor of Mental Health Day - MKE. “When we remove the stigma, fear and judgement of mental illness, we can promote seeking care to treatment and recovery. Increasing community awareness on mental illness stigma is the primary focus of the partnership between Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and NAMI.”

This production is made possible by: Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD), Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) Men of Color, Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority, Inc., Upsilon Mu Omega Chapter, Rogers Memorial Hospital, MIRACLE, National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) Greater Milwaukee, CADE LAW, LLC, Hurtado Zimmerman S.C., and Milwaukee (WI), The Links Inc.

To reserve seats for “Pieces: In My Own Voice,” or full a full schedule of the day’s events, visit <http://bit.ly/MKEmentalhealth17>. For more information or to set up an interview with the event organizers or a person affected by mental illness, contact Katy Glodosky at 920-627-2619 or katy@kanecommgroup.com

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